

THE LOS ANGELES TIMES  
28 February 1976

PAB - 68

# Radiation at Embassy Stirs Worker Unease

## U.S. Moscow Staff Reportedly Demands Explanation of Problem From State Dept.

From Times Wire Services

MOSCOW—American diplomats in Moscow have written a "very strong" letter to top State Department officials demanding to be told the full extent of the radiation problem at the embassy here and whether it represents a serious health hazard, sources said Friday.

Morale in the embassy, one of the largest and most important American posts abroad, has plummeted, the sources said, since reports of the radiation began to circulate three weeks ago. Although employees have been briefed, a full explanation of the situation—its causes and its dangers—has been withheld.

The letter, drafted in Moscow by the local branch of the American Foreign Service Assn., was intended for Secretary of State Henry A. Kissinger. But at the request of senior officials in the embassy, only a copy of the letter was sent to Washington with the original going to Ambassador Walter J. Stoessel Jr.

"People are incensed," said one of those responsible for preparing the letter. So far no response has been received and further action—including possibly a legal suit—is being considered.

Meanwhile in Washington, informed sources said Friday that the United States has compensated the husband of a former employee of the embassy in Moscow who died of cancer in 1968.

The husband received a settlement from the U.S. government in a lawsuit that claimed the woman was a victim of radiation, the informed sources said.

The compensation, understood to be less than \$10,000, was made on

grounds she had received inadequate medical care, it was learned.

The woman was a secretary at the embassy. Her husband was an administrative officer at the embassy and currently works at the State Department.

Reached at his home by the associated press, the husband declined to discuss the case. "I don't think it would serve any purpose," he said. He asked that his identity not be revealed.

Privately as well as publicly, State Department officials willing to discuss the situation insist there is no cause-and-effect relationship between the microwave emissions and any illness.

An official suggested that the compensation was actually paid on the basis of faulty medical diagnosis, and had nothing to do with the Soviet beams.

A marked increase in the intensity of Soviet microwave beams at the embassy six months ago has raised concerns about the health of Ambassador Stoessel, his staff and frequent visitors.

Informed sources say the Russians were trying to jam rooftop devices they believe are being used to eavesdrop on the conversations of Soviet officials living and working in the downtown area of the Soviet capital.

Dr. William Watson, medical director of the department, said in a statement that "the medical division has found no medical problems that it believes to be related to the situation at the embassy."

However, it was learned that the medical records of embassy person-

nel going back about 20 years were being checked. "I would not exclude that as one of the things we are doing to protect the health of our people," an official in Washington said privately.

Earlier the State Department disclosed that a medical technician had been sent to Moscow to conduct blood tests on embassy personnel.

The technician, Robert Griffin, replaces a part-time technician. A new physician, Dr. Sam Zweifel, was sent to Moscow last Friday to oversee the blood tests.

The department's press office described Zweifel, 50, as a family practitioner and said he had been sent to Moscow simply to allow Dr. Thomas Johnson, the physician normally on duty, to go on a three-week vacation.

Normally, when the embassy doctor takes leave, the U.S. workers are treated by the British physician or a doctor at another embassy. Acknowledging the change, Robert L. Funseth, the department spokesman, said "the employees would feel more comfortable if they had their own colleague there."

A report from Washington said that Ambassador Stoessel suffered from anemia, which had been aggravated by the radiation. The embassy has already denied an earlier report that Stoessel is ill, but the ambassador refused to comment on the new report. He did, however, deny that he had any plans to leave Moscow for reassignment. Stoessel has been here for two years.

At briefings previously and again Friday, U.S. officials in Moscow strongly implied—but would not say directly—that there appears to be no great danger to people living in or working at the embassy from the radiation. That uncertainty is apparently beginning to have its effect on some embassy personnel and their families.

"We have a need and a right to know what this is all about," said one angry American. "How long is this going to continue?"